MONITORING OF THE SITUATION OF RETURNEES IN AFGHANISTAN

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
January to December 1999





United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
OCM Afghanistan in Islamabad



Returnee Monitoring in Afghanistan

1. **Background**: Throughout the year, UNHCR staff extensively monitored the situation of returnees after their return in Afghanistan by systematically conducting individual interviews with heads of returnee families in areas of return and origin. Returnee monitoring was undertaken in identified areas of high refugee return during the ongoing or previous year across Afghanistan, with the exception of the Hazarajat region and the North-Eastern part of the country, to which hardly any repatriation takes place. The selection of communities in which returnee monitoring is undertaken is based on available data on returnees, returning under the UNHCR assisted voluntary repatriation programme. However, returnee monitoring does not exclusively cover Afghans returning within the framework of UNHCR's repatriation programme, but covers Afghan nationals who have spontaneously returned to Afghanistan without UNHCR assistance as well as those who have returned from Iran outside the voluntary repatriation programme.

2. The **purposes of returnee monitoring in Afghanistan** are the following:

- to support returnees in the realization of their basic human rights (namely those contained in the declarations of amnesty);
- to identify needs and level of assistance interventions (with a view to ensure that basic needs are met during an initial period of reintegration and beyond);
- to collate information on the situation of Afghans in the country of origin and in countries of asylum for the counseling of candidates for voluntary repatriation and advising UNHCR offices, other agencies and authorities working with Afghan refugees and returnees.

The findings are regularly shared, in an appropriate form, with other UN agencies and NGOs working within the framework of Principled Common Programming in Afghanistan in order to address identified needs in an integrated manner.

3. **Age and Gender Profiles**: During the period January to December 1999, UNHCR staff conducted 3, 270 interviews with heads of returnee households, covering a total of 18,798 returnees. Of the interviewed returnees, 77% had returned from Pakistan and 23% from Iran. Generally, 82% of the returnees are women and children (up to the age of 18 years). Of the total number of returnees, 22% are children below school age, 27% are between 6 and 12 years of age and 13 % are 13 to 18 years old. The majority of children of

school age do not attend schools (for further details please see below). Of the interviewed heads of returnee families, 97% were male heads of

household while 3% (100 families) were headed by an woman. In most of the cases of female headed returnee families, the women depend on income generated by their male (minor) children and other relatives.

4. **Voluntary repatriation**: 85% of the heads of returnee families interviewed during January to December 1999 stated that they had repatriated voluntarily, while 15% of the interviewees were returned from Iran. Most of the deportees are found in the Western Region and comprise Afghans who had, mostly undocumented, been living in Iran. 58% of the interviewed returnee families have received UNHCR's standard repatriation package (cash, wheat, plastic sheeting) upon arrival in Afghanistan.

5. **Safety and security**: 83% of the interviewed returnees stated that they feel safe and secure after return, 3% of the returnees reported that they don't feel entirely safe and 14% are still facing problems with landmines or unexploded ordinance in their areas of return, namely on agricultural land which has not been cleared.

6. **Places of origin**: Of the interviewed returnees 80% have been able to return to their places of origin or former habitual residence in Afghanistan while 20% of the families could not do so for various reasons: due to the lack of security in their areas of origin, due to the shortage or lack of water for agricultural purposes in their areas of origin elsewhere and by other means and in some cases because the returnees have owned no property (house or land) and therefore feel that economic opportunities are better elsewhere than at their places of previous residence in Afghanistan.

7. **Years in Exile**: A large majority of the interviewed returnees returned to Afghanistan after more than 10 years in exile in Iran or Pakistan. Only 8% of the returnees stayed less than 5 years abroad, 15% returned after 6-10 years of exile, 28% returned after 11-15 years of exile and the largest part (50% of the returnees) returned after 16-20 years of living in Pakistan or Iran. Given these long years of exile the majority of the family-members returning to Afghanistan today have actually not lived in their country and places of origin.

8. **Recovery of immovable property**: Of the returnees interviewed in 1999, 54% were able to recover their immovable properties such as land and houses which they or their families owned prior to the flight. 21% of the returnees found their houses completely destroyed, while 22% have not been able to reclaim their previous property, mainly those who felt or were not able to return to their places of origin.

9. **Ethnic origin**: The returnees interviewed in 1999 comprise 76% Pashtoons, 9% Tajiks, 12% Hazaras (exclusively in the Western region and among those deported), 2% Arabs and 1% Baloch (in the Southern region). In all regions of Afghanistan with the exception of the Western region,

Afghans of Pashtoon ethnic origin comprised the majority of interviewed returnees, including in the Northern region which saw a considerable increase in return in 1999 compared to previous years.

10. **Sources of income**: The heads of the interviewed returnee families work as laborers (24%), as farmers/animal herders/nomads (37%), in the private sector, e.g. small scale trade (11%) as teachers (1%) and as civil servants (2%). 27% of the returnees reported not to have any regular source of income through own work and are unemployed. In this regard it is important to note that 3% of the returnee families have left one or more members of their families back in Iran and 4% in Pakistan with the aim of securing some income for the family in Afghanistan.

11. **Access to health services**: 54% of the interviewed returnee families have access to health services in reachable distance (2 to 38 km) from their places of return, while as many as 46% do not have access to any kind of health services, neither a mobile nor a permanent doctor or clinic in their areas of return. Compared to available data on overall access to health services, with an estimated 36% of the population (17% in rural and 80% in urban areas) who has access to health services, access of returnees to health facilities is higher.

12. **Access to education**: Only 21% of the interviewed families have one or more school-age children (6 to 18 years of age) attending public or home-based school or receiving basic education in a madrasa, while 79% of the families do not have any of their children at school. The reasons for this low rate of attendance of schools are the lack of schools in the area of return (not even for boys); economic problems requiring children to support the family; the lack of qualified teachers or lack of teaching materials, and, in some cases, the restrictive attitude of the Taliban authorities with regard to formal education of girls. Many returnees stated that their children, now not attending school, had done so in Iran or Pakistan and a majority of those families confirmed that they would send their children, especially boys, to school, if it were possible.

UNHCR OCM Afghanistan
Protection Section
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Returnee Monitoring

Afghanistan

01/1999 - 12/1999

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No.	Description	Eastern Region		Western Region		Southern Region		Northern Region		Central Region		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Number of Families Interviewed	830	-	900	-	338	-	402	-	800		3,270	-
2	**Head of Families**												
2.1.	Male	814	98	869	97	337	100	389	97	761	95	3,170	97
2.2.	Female	16	2	31	3	1	0	13	3	39	5	100	3
3	**Number of Family Members**	**5,066**	-	**4,787**	-	**1,759**	-	**2,199**	-	**4,987**	-	**18,798**	-
3.1.	**Male**								-				
3.1.1.	1-5	551	11	546	11	263	15	263	12	435	9	2,058	11
3.1.2.	6-12	774	15	630	13	210	12	296	13	769	15	2,679	14
3.1.3.	13-18	339	7	331	7	79	4	145	7	351	7	1,245	7
3.1.4.	19-50	750	15	809	17	282	16	214	10	698	14	2,753	15
3.1.5.	Above 50	230	5	172	4	79	4	40	2	200	4	721	4
3.1.6	**Total**	**2,644**	**52**	**2,488**	**52**	**913**	**52**	**958**	**44**	**2,453**	**49**	**9,456**	**50**
3.2.	**Female**												
3.2.1.	1-5	564	11	542	11	234	13	276	13	490	10	2,106	11
3.2.2.	6-12	700	14	593	12	177	10	321	15	682	14	2,473	13
3.2.3.	13-18	280	6	226	5	83	5	143	7	455	9	1,187	6
3.2.4.	19-50	756	15	834	17	316	18	466	21	717	14	3,089	16
3.2.5.	Above 50	122	2	104	2	36	2	35	2	190	4	487	3
3.2.6.	**Total**	**2,422**	**48**	**2,299**	**48**	**846**	**48**	**1,241**	**56**	**2,534**	**51**	**9,342**	**50**
4	**Ethnic Origin**												
4.1.	Arab	-	-	23	3	12	4	-	-	24	3	59	2
4.2.	Baloch	-	-	-	-	41	12	-	-	1	0	42	1
4.3.	Hazara	-	-	387	43	-	-	-	-	-	-	387	12
4.4.	Uzbek	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	3	-	-	14	0
4.5.	Pashtoon	801	97	337	37	285	84	348	87	703	88	2,474	76
4.6.	Tajik	29	3	153	17	-	-	35	9	72	9	289	9
4.7.	Turkman	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	1	-	-	5	0
5	**Country of Asylum**												
5.1.	Iran	-	-	659	73	-	-	98	24	9	1	766	23
5.2.	Pakistan	830	100	241	27	338	100	304	76	791	99	2,504	77

No.	Description	Eastern Region		Western Region		Southern Region		Northern Region		Central Region		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
6	**Repatriation**												
6.1.	Voluntary	799	96	456	51	338	100	402	100	800	100	2,795	85
6.2.	Involuntary	31	4	444	49	-	-	-	-	-	-	475	15
7	**Years Outside of Afghanistan**												
7.1.	1-5	4	0	171	19	2	1	47	12	26	3	250	8
7.2.	6-10	61	7	276	31	9	3	58	14	76	10	480	15
7.3.	11-15	147	18	292	32	102	30	245	61	132	17	918	28
7.4.	16-20	618	74	161	18	225	67	52	13	566	71	1,622	50
8	**Family members outside country**												
8.1.	Pakistan	62	7	14	2	5	1	20	5	25	3	126	4
8.2.	Iran	-	-	81	9	1	0	-	-	-	-	82	3
8.3.	None	768	93	805	89	332	98	382	95	775	97	3,062	94
9.	**Did you receive UNHCR assistance upon return?**												
9.1.	Yes	532	64	397	44	255	75	216	54	489	61	1,889	58
9.2.	No	98	12	103	11	1	0	186	46	311	39	699	21
10	**Year of Return**												
10.1.	1999	221	27	516	57	123	36	318	79	575	72	1,753	54
10.2.	1998	558	67	313	35	128	38	84	21	164	21	1,247	38
10.3.	Before	51	6	71	8	87	26	-	-	61	8	270	8
11	**Place of Return**												
11.1.	Place of Origin	791	95	426	47	263	78	360	90	790	99	2,630	80
11.2.	Displacement	39	5	474	53	75	22	42	10	10	1	640	20
12	**Occupation (after return)**												
12.1.	Laborer	187	23	251	28	68	20	49	12	229	29	784	24
12.2.	Farmer/Animal Husbandry	422	51	203	23	162	48	194	48	220	28	1,201	37
12.3.	Civil Servant	18	2	3	0	2	1	14	3	18	2	55	2
12.4.	Teacher	9	1	4	0	1	0	2	0	19	2	35	1
12.5.	Private Sector	110	13	64	7	57	17	6	1	122	15	359	11
12.6.	Unemployed	84	10	375	42	48	14	137	34	192	24	836	26
13	**Recovery of Immovable Property**												
13.1.	Yes	780	94	394	44	188	56	182	45	346	43	1,890	58
13.2.	No	25	3	480	53	144	43	40	10	18	2	707	22
13.3.	Complete Destruction	25	3	26	3	6	2	180	45	436	55	673	21

No.	Description	Eastern Region		Western Region		Southern Region		Northern Region		Central Region		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
14	**Schooling**												
14.1.	**No. of Children in School Age**												
14.1.1.	Male	1,113	-	961	-	289	-	441	-	1,120	-	3,924	-
14.1.2.	Female	980	-	819	-	260	-	464	-	1,137	-	3,660	-
14.2.	Attending	299	36	245	27	66	20	11	3	330	41	951	29
14.3.	Not Attending	531	64	655	73	272	80	391	97	470	59	2,319	71
15	**Health Services**												
15.1.	Access	432	52	796	88	175	52	68	17	291	36	1,762	54
15.2.	No Access	398	48	104	12	163	48	334	83	509	64	1,508	46
16	**Security Concerns**												
16.1.	Land Mines	20	2	112	12	51	15	45	11	215	27	443	14
16.2.	Personal Security	26	3	74	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	3
16.3.	None	784	94	714	79	287	85	357	89	585	73	2,727	83

** The regions are comprised of the provinces as follows: The Eastern region comprises of Nangarhar (Jalalabad), Laghman, Paktia, Paktika and Kunar provinces.
The Western region includes Herat, Badghis and Farah provinces.
The Southern region comprises of Kandahar, Zabul, Orozgan, Helmand, Nemroz and Ghazni provinces (findings from Ghazni, being part of the Central region, are also recorded under the Southern region as Ghazni is covered by UNHCR SO Kandahar)
The Northern region includes Mazar-i-Sharif (Balkh), Jowzjan, Faryab, Andkhoy, Kunduz, Takhar, Badakhshan, Samangan and Baghlan provinces.
The Central region consists of Bamyan, Ghor (covered by UNHCR Field Unit in Bamyan), Kabul, Logar, Parwan, Kapisa and Wardak provinces.

***The "Number of Family Members" in row No. 3 includes the total number of "Male" in row No. 3.1.6. and "Female" in row No. 3.2.6.

****All percentages relate to the "Number of Families Interviewed" in row No. 1.

*****The "No. of Children in School Age" in row No. 12.1. is drawn from the number of persons in the age groups of 6-12 and 13 - 18 in rows No. 3.1.2. and 3.1.3. for male returnee children and from rows no. 3.2.2. and 3.2.3. for female returnee children.

******Please note that the numbers and percentages for rows 9.1. and 9.2. do not amount to 100% due to unavailability of the information for 682 returnee families who were interviewed before the revision of the monitoring form.